

Charles Dickens and Oliver Twist

'A loving heart is the truest wisdom'

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens is one of the greatest English novelists. He wrote a whole series of great works which give a vivid picture of life in early 19th century England, containing characters whose names have become legendary. He was basically a comic writer who used irony to ridicule people's hypocrisy, exposing the cruelty and injustice he saw in contemporary society. But his novels are also full of pathos.

His narrative style moves easily between tragedy and comedy and continually holds the reader's interest. This is mainly because his novels were printed in serial form in magazines and newspapers, so each chapter had to reach some sort of climax.

Dickens had an unhappy childhood because he had to leave school and work when he was very young (his father was sent to prison for debt). This experience made him unhappy but gave him a knowledge and sympathy for working-class life. Like all the Victorian writers he was, in fact, very interested in examining people and society. He chose to express himself through the novel, which was a literary form that gave a detailed analysis of real situation, reflected social changes such as the industrial revolution, the struggle for democracy and the growth of towns.

Dickens' works, realistic in subject-matter but exaggerated in style, are written with irony. The writer wants to show the disease created by the fast industrialization in all its manifestations; so he chooses both in *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* the landscape of dirty suburbs, factories and working-class life describing them in the most detailed way in order to give a deep sensation of realism.

In conclusion Dickens criticizes the effects of industrial revolution in Victorian Age; he is against the evils produced by English society, that is economic individualism and materialism.

OLIVER TWIST

In this sentimental novel Dickens shows a deep awareness of the social problems of the time: the poverty of the masses, the horrors of the slums, the bad school and medical assistance.

Oliver Twist is the story of an orphan and his adventures in the industrial London of the second half of the 18th century. Through all his story Oliver is accompanied by bad people. He grows up in a workhouse and runs away to London. There he is adopted by a gang of criminals, who force him to help them in their crimes. One of the gang, Nancy, saves him and a kind gentleman gives him a new opportunity in life.

The setting is the London suburbs in a scenery of great poorness that emphasizes the bad conditions in which the working-class was forced to live by the factory owners. In the novel we can see the ironical description of the lawmakers and their action, the children's exploitation, a world of hungry and desperate people made wild-like by the bad life conditions. This world is described through the eyes of an orphan, who becomes the symbol of the weak and the poor people, all victims of industrialization.

A1. Charles Dickens ...**T****F**

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) was a 20 th century novelist | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) was a British writer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) was a realistic novelist | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) is a contemporary writer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A2. The term 'climax' refers to ...**T****F**

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) the most exciting part of a story, drama, play etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) the turning point of a narrative work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) the point of highest tension of a work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) the end of a story | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A3. Why did Dickens have awareness of working-class life?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) because he was unhappy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) because his father was a criminal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) because he had to work when he was young | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) because he was very young | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A4. Why did Dickens decide to write novels?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) because novel was realistic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) because novel was a literary form | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) because he wanted to write about an idealistic world | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) because he agreed with social changes | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A5. Oliver Twist and Hard Times ...**T****F**

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) are Dickens's works | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) are set in industrial towns | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) describe idealistic societies | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) are a detailed picture of industrial society | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A6. Charles Dickens believed that materialism ...

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) was due to economic individualism | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) was an aspect of economic individualism | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) was a consequence of industrial revolution | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) was a reason for industrial revolution | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A7. Oliver Twist

- | | T | F |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) is set in London | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) contains a detailed picture of industrial suburbs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) is the main character of the story | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) was written by Charles Dickens | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A8. Factory owners

- | | T | F |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) are negative characters in the story | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) were a symbol of great poorness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) were poor people in an industrial society | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) forced working-class people to live in bad conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A9. Why did Charles Dickens write Oliver Twist?

- | | T | F |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) Because he wanted to provide an ironical description of industrial revolution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) Because he had sympathy for factory owners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) Because he wanted to denounce the bad consequences of industrial revolution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) Because he was an orphan | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A10. The point of view of the novel is that of ...

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| A) an orphan | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) a factory owner | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) poor people | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) weak people | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A11. Who was Charles Dickens?

A12. What did he write about in his works?

A13. Why did he use irony?

A14. Why were readers so interested in his novels?

A15. Why was Dickens so aware of the working-class life?

A16. What literary genre did he choose and why?

A17. What's the setting of Dickens's novels?

A18. Were Dickens's novels realistic?

A19. Where is Oliver Twist set?

A20. Who is Oliver Twist?

A21. What does Oliver Twist represent?

What about you?

1. Have you ever watched Oliver Twist on TV?
 2. Do you like realistic novel? Why?
 3. Do you prefer a different kind of reading?
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